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ABSTRACT

The Bridge, Inc.'s Independent Living Demonstration Project, a residential project assisting 16- and 17-year-old runaways and throwaways to live successfully on their own after receiving 6-8 months of project services, served 10 male and 12 female adolescents during its second year of operation. Youth were from high, middle, and lower income families; 50 percent were runaways and 41 percent were throwaways. Over one-third had been physically or sexually abused by their families and another one-third had been neglected. Status of 11 youth who had been out of the project an average of 5.7 months showed that project youth had statistically significantly better records in achieving employment and stable living situations compared to 18 control group youth receiving other types of services. Project youth also had school achievements showing a trend in the direction of significance. Pre-post means on measures of self-concept, locus of control, and a personality profile did not show significant change. A concurrent follow-up of the first year youth who had been out of the project an average of 15.9 months revealed that these youth continued to maintain a strong record of success: 81.8 percent were in stable living situations; 81.8 percent were employed; and 90.9 percent were in school or had graduated from high school. The results suggest that the Bridge, Inc. Residential Independent Living Demonstration Project has shown marked success in assisting runaways and homeless youth to achieve employment, stable living situations, and educational progress. (NB)

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Second Year Follow-Up Report

The Bridge, Inc.

Residential Independent Living Project Evaluation

February 1986

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CG 019047

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Summary

The Bridge, Inc.
Residential Independent Living Demonstration Project
Second Year Research Results

Results for a research study of the second year of The Bridge, Inc.'s Independent Living Demonstration Project are reported. A total of 22 youth, 10 male and 12 female were served during the second year in a residential project designed to assist runaway and throwaway 16 and 17 year olds to be able to live successfully on their own after receiving project services for 6-8 months. Youth were from high (22.7%), middle (13.6%) and lower (63.3%) income families; 50% were runaways and 41% were throwaways (youth whose families would not allow them to live at home). Over one-third had been physically or sexually abused by their families and another third had been neglected (defined as providing inadequate food, clothing, shelter or supervision). Over 50% had no major personal problems, although about 25% of the youth had drug or alcohol problems. Almost 80% were school dropouts.

Status of 11 youth who had been out of the project an average of 5.7 months was recorded. It was found that project youth had statistically significant better records in achieving employment and stable living situations ($p<.02$) compared to 18 control group youth receiving other types of services. Project youth also had school achievements showing a trend in the

direction of significance ($p<.10$). Pre-post means on measures of self-concept, locus of control and a personality profile did not show significant change.

A concurrent follow-up of the first year youth who had been out of the project an average of 15.9 months is also reported. These youth (N=11, 4 missing) continued to maintain a strong record of success: 81.8% employed; 90.9% in school or had completed high school; and 81.8% in stable living situations. Eight of these youth also participated in a third administration of the three psychological questionnaires. Statistically significant increases in self-concept between first and third administration were found and significant decreases in interpersonal discomfort, while a trend toward decreased "alienation" (e.g. emotional problems) was also found ($p<.10$).

The report concludes that The Bridge, Inc. Residential Independent Living Demonstration Project has shown marked success in assisting 16 and 17 year old runaways and homeless youth to achieve employment, stable living situations and educational progress. While it is less clear how much intra-psychic change accompanies the behavioral changes found, for at least some youth followed for an average of 15.9 months after leaving the program, both behavioral and some intra-psychic changes achieve significance.

I. Introduction

The Bridge Residential Independent Living Demonstration Project was funded in 1983 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Development Services. Bridge received a second grant in 1984 for a second year demonstration of a modified model based on the first year experience. A comprehensive evaluation of the first year project was completed in March of 1985, including comparison of project with a control group using a quasi-experimental research design. The first year research results indicated statistically significant differences between project youth and the control youth during follow-up on the dimensions of adequate living situation, school and work achievements. Project youth were also significantly less defensive and had better self-concepts than control youth at follow-up.

The second year of the demonstration attempted to modify the project to place more emphasis on independence (less staff supervision, apartments where youth did their own cooking and had their own keys) and on developing commitments to community service and hobbies. The primary outcomes of the project remained the same:

1. project youth would show positive changes in self-concept;

2. project youth would develop a strong sense of personal control;

3. project youth would show changes in their personality profile in the direction of more "normal" adolescent behavior, showing decreases in alienation, depression, social nonconformity and defensiveness; and

4. project youth would achieve high success rates in gaining and keeping employment, in continuing their education and achieving stable living situations.

This report details the findings of the second year of the residential independent living project, including effects on 22 youth who participated in the project and follow up of 11 of the first year youth. For a detailed description of the project and the research design, see the March 1985 report.

II. Profile of Second Year Youth, N=22.

A total of 22 youth were referred to the project during the second year, (including one youth held over from the first year program). Of these 10 were male, (45%) 12 female (55%). Three of the young women had infants living with them and both infant and mother moved into the house for project services. Seven were age 16 and fifteen age 17 at time of referral. Ten were white, four black, five Hispanic, two Asian and one Native American. Compared to the first year referrals, this group was about the same age and gender, but had a much higher percentage of minorities (total of 54.5% vs. 33.4%). This group also differed from the first year group in terms of socioeconomic status, runaway/throwaway status, family structure and presence of family abuse. A higher percentage were low income, throwaways but from intact families. (See Tables I-III). A somewhat smaller percentage were physically abused or neglected, although a similar number had been sexually abused. A much larger group did not have evidence of specific abuse. (See Table IV). A much larger percentage of this group also had no major personal

problems at intake (54.5%) although a similar percentage were school drop outs (See Table V and VI).

Table I.
Socioeconomic Status of Second Year Project Youth Versus First Year Youth

	Year 1		Year 2	
SES	No.	%	No.	%
High	2	9.5	5	22.7
Medium	8	38.1	3	13.6
Low	7	33.3	14	63.3
Unknown	4	19.1		

Table II.
Runaway Status of First and Second Year Project Youth

Status	1st Year		2nd Year	
	No.	%	No.	%
Runaway	15	71.4	11	50
Throwaway*	6	28.6	9	40.9
Neither	0	0	2	9.1

*Family will not allow youth to live with them; usually also have been runaways.

Table III.
Family Status of First and Second Year Project Youth

Status	1st Year		2nd Year	
	No.	%	No.	%
Intact	3	14.3	8	36.3
Non-intact	18	85.7	14	63.3

Table IV.
Presence of Abuse or Neglect in Family History

Problem	1st Year		2nd Year	
	No.	%	No.	%
Physical abuse	8	38.1	5	22.7
Sexual abuse	3	14.3	3	13.6
Neglect*	8	38.1	7	31.8
None	2	9.5	7	31.8

*Absence of adequate food, clothing, shelter or supervision.

Table V.
Major Personal Problems of Youth (Multiple Entries)

Problem	1st Year		2nd Year	
	No.	%	No.	%
Alcohol abuse	6	28.6	5	22.7
Drug abuse	8	38.1	5	22.7
Prostitution*	6	28.6	1	4.5
Criminal behavior**	6	28.6	1	4.5
Mental health***	2	9.5	3	13.6
None	6	28.6	12	54.5

*male and female

**larceny, breaking and entering, assault

***suicide attempts, hospitalizations

Table VI.
School Drop-Out Status

Status	1st Year		2nd Year	
	No.	%	No.	%
School drop-out	17	81	17	77.3
Still attending regular public school	4	19	5	22.7

In addition to the demographic profiles, youth were asked to fill out three psychological questionnaires. (See Table VII) These were designed to measure self-concept, sense of control and a personality profile consisting of five dimensions. The Rosenberg Self-Concept Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) consists of 10 questions to which the respondent answers "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree" or "strongly disagree". Answers are converted to numerical values for scoring and the largest possible score is 40 points. Self-concept among normal high school students was found to be high for 39-45%. For second year project youth the average score is 75.7% with only 15% showing high self-concept (high is a score of 85%+). Self-concept is an important psychological dimension because it has been found to correlate with such behavioral attributes as school success and involvement in constructive activities.

The Rotter Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966) was used to indicate sense of personal control. Individuals who lack a sense of personal control and believe that "fate" or "luck" controls their lives tend to be less motivated to try to actively improve

their situation. Increases in sense of internal control (on this scale indicated by a lower score) would be interpreted as a positive sign of youth taking more responsibility for their own lives in a constructive manner. The maximum score on the Rotter Scale is 23, indicating an extreme lack of self-control. The mean score for adults on the Rotter for a normative sample has been found to be 8.3. The mean score for second year program youth of 9.2 thus shows slightly less internal or personal control than a normal population.

The Psychological Screening Inventory (Lanyon, 1973) is a 300-item instrument designed to quickly and easily give indication of individuals who may have abnormal psychological problems on one of five dimensions: alienation (emotional problems), social non-conformity (deviant and criminal behavior), discomfort (self-concept), expression (locus of control), and defensiveness. Profiles of normal high school populations are available. The questionnaire is designed so that a percentile score of 50% is normative. Therefore, scores very much above or below 50% are "abnormal", however, normal youth tend to have somewhat higher scores on "social non-conformity" than adults. Mean scores for project youth from both the first and second years indicate that alienation and social non-conformity are the two scales which are most different from a normal population. However, the second year group was determined to be significantly less socially non-conforming (i.e. less deviant) than the first year group. On the other four scales the second year group was more similar to the first year group. (See Table VII).

Table VII.
Mean Pre-Project Scores on Psychological
Instruments for First and Second Year Youth

Instrument	MEAN SCORES First Year N=20	Second Year N=20	First Year Project and Controls, N=57
Rosenberg Self-Concept*	29.88	29.11	29.44
Rotter Locus of Control*	9.4	9.2	9.7
PSI** -			
Alienation	63.4	59.55	60.5
Social Nonconformity	65.1	56.25+	63.9
Discomfort	49.25	49.0	52.1
Expression	52.05	51.45	49.6
Defensiveness	46.65	47.95	44.7

*Scores reported as numbers; **Scores reported as percentiles

+$p<.05$, $t = 2.57$, $df = 38$

Case histories of a few of the second year youth will serve to better describe some of the reasons these youth needed the project.

Case #1: This 17 year old black woman had been taken into Department of Social Services custody due to a chaotic and neglectful home situation. She had spent much of her life with a grandparent in the South, but returned to Boston at age 12 to a mother then openly gay and involved with drugs. She lived with a sister, various boyfriends and prostituted. She was in her fourth pregnancy when referred to the project but unlike previously, she planned to bear this child. The father of the child had been incarcerated for a shooting.

Case #2: This 17 year old white male had a history of drug abuse and suicide attempts. His parents were still together but had a history of alcoholism. He had run away many times and engaged in homosexual activity with a variety of partners. He was referred to Bridge from a runaway shelter.

Case #3: This 17 year old white female also had a history of drug problems and a suicide attempt. She was adopted as an infant and came from a high income suburban family. She had run away many times and lived on the street for a while, as well as had been in several Department of Social Service placements.

Case #4: This 17 year old Native American male had a lengthy family history of problems. The father was alcoholic; the mother lived in Canada on a reservation most of the year. The father and older brother had sexually molested a sister. There were 11 other siblings, most of them older. Several, including this youth, had been removed from the family and placed in state custody due to these problems. At the time of referral to Bridge, he was living with his father and two brothers, but the father was unemployed, there was not enough food, and no permanent residence.

As far as status at actual intake to the project, 22.7% of the second year youth were employed and 31.8% attending public school, a GED program or had already completed high school or a GED. Residential status at intake can be seen in Table VIII.

III. Project Results For Second Year Youth

As reported above, a total of 22 youth spent some time in the project during the second year. Of these, only one stayed less than 30 days, and thus for analysis purposes will be dropped. Other youth stayed an average of 3.3 months. At the end of the year, eight of the 21 were still residing in the house, the status of two youth was unknown, and the status of 11 youth who had left the project (two to twelve months after they left) was recorded. Table IX shows the living, work and education status of the 11 youth who had left the project (average length of time since leaving was 5.7 months), and comparable figures for an 18-youth control group which was part of the first year research study.

Table VIII.
Residential Status at Intake for First and Second Year Youth

Residence	First Year N=21		Second Year N=22	
	No.	%	No.	%
Immediate family	2	9.5	7	31.8
Relative	1	4.8	1	4.5
Friend	1	4.8	3	13.6
Shelter	9	42.9	3	13.6
Unacceptable*	3	14.3	0	-
Street**	4	19.0	5	22.7
Other program	0	-	2	9.1
On own	0	-	1	4.5

*Living with pimp, drug dealer, older person in unhealthy relationship, etc.

**In abandoned buildings, doorways etc.

Table IX.
Living, Employment and Educational Status of Eleven Youth from Second Project Group at Follow-up and a Control Group

Status	Project, N=11		Control, N=18	
	No.	%	No.	%
Employed	10	90.9	8	44
In school or graduated	7	63.6	6	33
Stable living situation	9	81.8	6	33

These results indicate that the eleven youth who left the project were doing significantly better in the three areas evaluated than when they entered the program. In addition, when

progress of the project youth is compared to the group of 18 control youth followed during the first year study (youth with similar backgrounds but involved in other programs and services than the Bridge independent living house), results indicate that the second year group was doing significantly better in maintaining employment and stable living situations (X^2=5.84 and 5.86, $p<.02$). While school achievement was not maintained at such a high level, the difference is still in the direction of significance compared to the controls (X^2=3.2, $p<.10$). (Note: All Chi square calculations were done using Yates correction for small expected frequencies.)

Additional comparisons were made for a group of second year youth who were administered the psychological questionnaires at two different points in time. This group consisted of a total of 12 youth, six who were still residing in the project at the time they were re-administered the questionnaires, and six who had left the project (average length of time out was 7.8 months, range 5-12 months). All these youth made significant gains in employment, education and stable living situations compared to pre-program status. As can be seen from Table X, however, there were no significant changes on measures of intra-psychic status.

In contrast to the lack of significant change on the intra-psychic measures, this group, when compared to the first year controls on post-project employment, education and living status, (as well as the previously reported 11 youth who had all left the program during the second year) showed significantly better

achievements in work and living status and a positive trend in educational achievement. (See Table XI).

Table X.
Pre and Post Mean Scores on Psychological Instruments for 12 Second Year Project Youth
(Mean time between pre-post test = 7.4 months)

Instrument	Pre-project mean	Post-project mean
Rosenberg Self-Concept*	30.66	30.83
Rotter Locus of Control*	7.9	8.58
PSI** -		
Alienation	56.9	56.08
Social Nonconformity	58.9	61.5
Discomfort	50.08	47.5
Expression	52.4	54.67
Defensiveness	52.0	52.8

*Scores reported as numbers; **Scores reported as percentiles

Table XI.
Living, Employment and Educational Status of 12 Second Year Project Youth at Follow-up (6 still in project) Compared to First Year Controls

Status	Project, N=12		Controls, N=18	
	No.	%	No.	%
Employed*	11	91.6	8	44
In school or graduated **	9	75	6	33
Stable living conditions***	10	83.3	6	33

*X^2=6.8, p<.01; ** X^2=3.46,p<.10; *** X^2= 5.46, p<.02.

IV. Conclusions Concerning Second Year of the Residential Living Demonstration

It can be seen that the second year of Bridge's independent living demonstration project served a somewhat different group of youth in terms of presenting problems and psychological profile. On the surface they appeared to be less psychologically different than other "normal" adolescents, and significantly less socially nonconforming than the group served during the first year. The limited sample of 12 youth for whom a second administration of the psychological questionnaires was completed showed no significant intra-psychic changes. This is in contrast to a similar first year group of 12 who showed significant changes in increased self-concept and decreases in defensiveness. One explanation for this is that the second year group was already less "abnormal" on the psychological dimensions and thus they had fewer or less intense problems which required intervention. On the other hand, as was noted in the first year report, such intra-psychic changes are very difficult to effect. For youth who start out with fairly normal profiles, it would not be expected that dramatic changes would be found.

The changes from pre-project status to post-project status on the behavioral measures, however, show similar significant results as found in the first year study. Not only do youth who participate in the Bridge independent living project tremendously improve their education, employment and living status compared to when they enter the program, but this improvement remains significant when these youth are compared to other youth with

similar backgrounds and services, but who do not participate in the Bridge project. For both years of the demonstration project youth who participated in the project had statistically significant achievements in employment and living situation compared to controls. The first year group also had a statistically significant achievement in education, and this was also a trend in the positive direction for second year youth. It can be concluded that the second year of the Bridge independent living project, with a slightly modified project model to stress more independence on the part of youth, was almost identically as successful as the first year project.

The success of the project as a whole (both years taken into account) appears to be most striking on the behavioral level. While some significant intra-psychic changes were found during Year 1, none were found in Year 2. It was postulated that long term success of these youth would depend on such intra-psychic changes. In order to determine the relationship between intra-psychic changes and longer term status, a second study was conducted concurrent with the above data collection on second year youth. The second study was designed to continue to follow first year youth and to re-administer the psychological questionnaires a third time. This data is reported in Section V.

V. Results of Continued Follow-up of First Year Project Youth

A total of 21 youth were referred to the project during the first year. Five were assigned for analysis purposes to the control group since they stayed less than 30 days in the project.

Of the remaining 16 project youth, one was switched to the second year group for analysis, four were lost from contact with Bridge, and eleven were contacted for long term follow-up. Those contacted for continued follow-up had been out of the project for 9 to 20 months, with an average of 15.9 months. Employment, education and living status was noted for each youth, based on the "predominate" pattern of their life style since leaving the program. This judgment was required since several youth had periods of both good and poor functioning, alternating between stable living and employment and periods of unemployment and unhealthful living situations. In order to be judged successful in any one category a youth must have spent at least 75% of the time since leaving the program in the desireable category. The results of this follow-up show continued high levels of employment, educational attainment and stable living situations. (See Table XII).

Table XII.

Long Term Follow-up of First Year Project Youth, N=11

Status	No.	%
Employed	9	81.8
In school or graduated	10	90.9
Stable living situations	9	81.8

While these figures would look considerably dimmer if all of the unknown cases proved to have had no success in any area during follow up, from earlier contacts with the four missing youth, it was known that two were working and at least one had finished her

GED while in the project. Thus although out of contact with Bridge, it cannot be assumed that the youth for whom data were not available were uniformly doing poorly.

Of the eleven youth who remained in contact with Bridge, eight were re-administered the three psychological questionnaires for a third time. This group represented a 75% success rate in achieving stable living conditions; 75% employed; and 100% were in school or had completed high school (including three in college). The mean scores from the questionnaires at first, second and third administration are shown in Table XIII.

Table XIII.
First, Second and Third Administration Mean Scores for Eight First Year Project Youth on Psychological Questionnaires

Instrument	First Mean	Second Mean	Third Mean
Rosenberg Self-Concept*	28.6	31.9	33.3+
Rotter Locus of Control*	9.1	10.0	8.6
PSI** -			
Alienation**	60.25	53.4	52.5++
Social Nonconformity	65.6	63.1	62.75
Discomfort	48.6	46.25	40.38+++
Expression	51.5	53.6	55.5
Defensiveness	48.5	45.0	48.25

* Scores given as numbers;
** Scores given as percentiles.
\+ t=4.12 Significant at $p<.01$ compared to first administration;
++ t=2.33, trend in direction of less alienation, $p<.10$;
+++ t=2.44 significant at $p<.05$.

The results indicate a steady and significant increase in the positive direction in the area of self-esteem; a third

administration score very close to norms on the Rotter Locus of Control Scale; a trend in the direction of decrease in emotional disturbance; and a significant decrease in interpersonal discomfort.

These long term findings are encouraging, especially when both the behavioral and intra-psychic measures are taken together. Not only do project youth achieve specific behavioral objectives and some psychological gains shortly after leaving the project, they also continue to show psychological gains 9 months to 20 months later and in large part maintain the behavioral gains made early in program participation.

VI. General Conclusions and Recommendations

The Bridge Residential Independent Living Project has achieved marked success over two years of operation. For both years, groups of youth who entered the project achieved statistically significant behavioral gains at follow-up. In addition, these gains in education, employment and living status were achieved by youth who were for the large part school drop-outs, unemployed, and victims of a wide variety of abusive and neglectful family histories. The dramatic behavioral gains can, however, be contrasted to gains which are not as explicit in the intra-psychic area. Only first year youth showed significant gains in self-concept and a decrease in defensiveness after several months of program participation. Similar changes were not found for second year youth, although second year mean pre-program scores were less deviant than those of first year youth,

indicating less of a need to improve. By contrast, first year youth involved in the longer term follow-up continued to show improved mean scores in several areas, even up to 20 months after program participation. Second year youth should be followed for another year to determine whether a similar gain pattern will develop.

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence indicated by the three psychological measures used by the study, the specific gains in employment, education and stable living situations point to support for the Bridge project model which emphasizes concrete skills these youth need to survive in a socially acceptable manner. While Bridge also provides a range of other counseling, health care, and recreational services, the strength of the project appears to be that the youth are given a clear and unequivocal message that work and education are the basic requirements. In addition, the examples of group living with consistent supervision around cleaning, cooking, responsibility to others and maintaining a regular daily schedule seem to set a pattern that is capable of creating long term gains for youth who enter the project from chaotic and problem-filled family and street situations.

In conclusion, the Bridge model seems to provide a mechanism for youth who are quite difficult to serve to achieve remarkable gains, not by dwelling on their past failures and extensive needs, but by focusing on the basic skills needed to survive without resorting to street life or returning to abusive home situations. As noted in the first year study, however, the

independent living model alone is not the only solution to assisting troubled adolescents. A continuum of services starting with work with troubled families is necessary to prevent the adolescent runaway or throwaway. And, a follow-up supported apartment project would assure even more success for youth completing the independent living project as housing costs continue to make it difficult for young people to find a decent place to live on low salaries.

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